VOLUME II
No. 3

WINTER-
SPRING
1944

"And what rough beast its hour come round at last . . ."—*William Butler Yeats*

THE CHIMERA

EDITORS

WILLIAM ARROWSMITH FEARON BROWN FREDERICK MORGAN
DAVID NEWTON BARBARA HOWES

Contents

Amour Among Animals: *Emma Swan* 2
The New Parnassianism and Recent Poetry: *William Troy* 3
Interlude With a Pu-Pu Bird: *Nicholas Moore* 17
The Acrobats: *John Malcolm Brinnin* 18
Script: *Beverly Baff* 19
Harbor Impression: *Gray Burr* 20
Major Catastrophe: *David Newton* 21
Carpe Diem: *Barbara Howes* 27
The Robbery: *Howard Moss* 29
Return of Autumn: *Pablo Neruda* 30
Watch: *Priscilla Bromley* 31
White Lily and Hail: *Richard Eberhart* 33
On Poetry: *Jean Wahl* 35
Annunciation: *Harvey Buchanan* 41
Girl At Midnight: *Weldon Kees* 42
Ballads For Janus: *Edwin Honig* 43
Book Reviews 45
About The Contributors 48

Published quarterly at 265 West 11th Street, New York 14, N. Y.; 50 cents a copy, four numbers for $2.00. Unsolicited manuscripts not returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Copyright 1944 by David Newton
Printed by Van Vechten Press, Metuchen, N. J.

Amour Among Animals

By Emma Swan

If the deer walking in the woods
refrains from rubbing antlers
with a wild-fowl's wings

or a rabbit from keeping
to his leaping path because
an amorous grouse lies there

if they stand quietly apart
and eye each other
they are not friends nor

need they be taken therefore
for enemies being simply
animals of different kinds

different as fish and flowers
but aren't they friends?
Couldn't they ever marry

into each other's families
the soft rabbit and the swift bird?
Unless you accept that a whole zoo

is within each of them a universe
in one one of a kind
one hen one deer

we may as well concede that
they are not compatible and
let them part while they may

without waiting for wind to blow
fur to fly fire to fall
and pack them off to Hell.

The New Parnassianism and Recent Poetry

By William Troy

BEYOND ANY DOUBT, and it has been evident for some time, we are in the midst of what may be described, at the risk of indulging in rather large words, as another Poetic Renaissance. The evidence is overwhelming: the number of anthologies and separate volumes pouring from the presses, the little magazines devoted largely or exclusively to verse, and the increasing lip-service being rendered poetry by the older and more conservative book-supplements. The phenomenon is common to England and America, and in America it is common to almost every region of the country. Interesting as it might be to venture some explanation for its occurrence at this particular moment, theorizing of this sort is outside the present scope. Besides, not many people are likely to forget how the Romantic movement paralleled the French Revolution and the Napoleonic epoch; how the French symbolists wrote in the shadow of the Franco-Prussian war; and how the last important generation in European poetry —the generation of Yeats, Valéry, Rilke and Mr. Eliot—reached its fulfillment in the decade following the first World War. What must concern us, in the presence of this vast quantity of new verse, is as always the more immediate and general question of quality. And, more particularly, we are challenged into examining the nature and quality of its much stressed and usually self-labelled "newness."

NOTE: This is a slightly revised version of a paper read before the "Poetic Form and General Aesthetics" section of the Modern Language Association of America, at Indianapolis, Indiana, December, 1941.

I

To say anything about poetry is, of course, to say pretty much everything; and, although this discussion must limit itself to the problem of language, it is not possible to get very far with this problem without some remarks concerning the situation to which all this new verse is a response. Let us begin by noting that the situation reflected in it is uniform and even monotonous: it is a poetry of doom. But here a few distinctions must be made: the poetry of the Pound-Eliot generation was also a poetry of doom; it was overcast not only by the searing memory of a recent historical experience but by a foreboding of an even more shattering and destructive event. It was concerned with a crisis in human values—moral, spiritual and intellectual—on a world-wide scale. The tone was prophetic: Mr. Eliot found his archetype in the blind Tiresias in the wilderness; it was actually a poetry of predoom. In the generation that followed, History took on an ever more menacing actuality; it was knocking on the door with an urgency that only the poets themselves seem to have detected with any degree of clearness and alarm. But, in the work of Auden, Spender, Lewis, and their numerous American disciples, prophecy gave way most of the time to exhortation—the silent monologue to the Class Oration. Not only were they thoroughly imbued with the sense of disaster but they sought to make poetry a practical means of averting it. It was a period in which History was conceived as providing the poet not only with background and materials but with a public role; a period in which imagination all too often retired before the compulsions of the social conscience.

Now the newest crop of poets are writing after the long predicted and unsuccessfully averted Event has materialized; they are writing *in* the Event. It is possible to name names and name places; a whole demonology and topography of disaster are available to their purposes. In particular, the names of cities—Guernica, Nanking, Prague and Vienna, replacing the Venice and Byzantium of their elders—echo through their pages like blasts

from the Last Judgment. Mr. Auden had set the example of the poet as globe-trotter; but some of these poets would be Baedekers not only to a continent but to the universe. This is from one of George Barker's *Pacific Sonnets*:

> And in these islands hung on the fringe of Asia
> The herbaceous border of the Siberian waste,
> Where I move giddily in disgust or aphasia
> Straddling the huts of paper and paste,
> Here in this vacuum where goldfish float
> Between transparent planes of mental negation
> But are called thoughts, here on this glass
> I see reflected the mechanism of fate
> Evolving the instruments of destruction
> For all that I've left; the Europe that was,
> Whose historical frieze, in its seizure,
> Shrieks with the voice of Sibelius, crying
> Like a violin in the middle of the sea,
> "I am dying!"

And Frederic Prokosch never tires of taking us on these Grand Tours:

> Far to the east extend the ancient seas,
> The dear Danubian banks, the archaic trees
> Among whose pillars still the restless dead
> Dispel their homesick odors on the breeze;
>
> Crete blows the night across her wicked floors
> And Sicily now locks her little doors,
> And up the Adriatic leap the clouds
> And hurl a shadow on her sucking shores,
>
> And northward through the benches of the park
> Stealthily moves the thin conspiring dark;
> The thieves and fairies huddle by the bridge
> And hear the sickly hounds of Brussels bark.

To their common situation the younger poets are responding as variously as might be expected—on a scale that ranges from hysterical panic and indignation to something like the first tentative steps toward a rediscovery of the tragic. It is here that we

come sharply upon our subject: for in the attempt to express oneself in an epoch of broken communications the major problem is that of language; and for the poet the problem of language is the problem of metaphor. The general type of metaphor predominating in most of this writing should already be evident; but a few more examples may be offered.

> From the cold streets of Cambridge
> The lapis and basalt of St. Paul's
> Makes disturbing division, a golden
> And Byzantine disarray. Hath not
> Some golden Paleologus of the City Council
> Ordained this disorderly splendor?

The second example has the advantage of being also an unmistakably explicit statement of what is a quite frequent response:

> But punctually tomorrow you will see
> All this silent and dissembling world
> Of stilted sentiment suddenly melt
> Into mush and watery welter of words
> Beneath the warm and moving traffic of
> Feet and actual fact. Over the stark plain
> The stilted mill-chimneys once again spread
> Their sackcloth and ashes, a flowing mane
> Of repentance for the false day that's fled.

Certainly this device of juxtaposing words nostalgic of the cultural past with words from the context of modern industrial urban society is familiar enough to any reader of modern verse. Not to be missed, because commented upon, is the contrast between "the cold streets of Cambridge" and the Oriental "lapis and basalt," between the "golden Paleologus" and the "City Council." And the second quotation, with its matter-of-fact, frontal attack on its subject, would not approximate poetry at all without the contrast between "mill-chimneys" and "sackcloth and ashes," although the "flowing mane" does confuse matters somewhat. Of course this is the sort of thing which Pound, Eliot, Stevens, through their borrowing from the French symbolists, made

available to a whole generation of their admirers. Originally an attempt by the modern poet to resolve verbally the conflict between his obsessions with the past and the actualities of a present for which he had little sympathy and even less respect, the device has had a rather chequered career. But before noting the particular changes that the more recent poets have been able to ring on it we must consider certain dangers that have always been inherent in its use.

In the first place, it makes exceptional demands on the poet, requiring not only a thorough-going immersion in the cultural tradition but also unrelaxed awareness of everything that is most real and important in the general life of his time. It is not enough to keep up with the morning newspapers or to take a course in the History of Ideas. Without an equally strong grasp of both past and present there can be no authentic conflict, or only a reduced conflict, and hence a reduced poetry. Such a combined sense Baudelaire possessed, and Rimbaud in his last writings, and in our own time Mr. Eliot and, to an even greater extent, Joyce, who should properly be considered in this whole tradition. The absence of it leads to a particularly transparent variety of factitiousness—the substitution in the poem of daily headlines and odds-and-ends of bogus or second-hand erudition for the experience of which they should be properly merely the vehicle. It leads to that ever lurking danger for the artist—insincerity.

The second trouble with the device differs from the first only in being of a strictly technical order. It arises from the fact that because it must always depend on a contrasting or antithetical set of references it requires two word-symbols rather than the one characteristic of the classical metaphor. What the classical metaphor represents is an already completed fusion of an indefinite number of diverse associations in a single word. In Cleopatra's speech following Antony's death,

> Ah, women, look!
> Our lamp is spent, it's out

the whole rhetorical effect is staked on a single rather common-

place image. While it is true that this is reinforced and controlled by other light-images throughout the play—"sun" and "candle," for example — it is not dependent on them or on any external set of images. It is self-sufficient. And in Blake's stanzas

> O Rose, thou art sick!
> The invisible worm
> That flies in the night,
> In the howling storm,
>
> Has found out thy bed
> Of crimson joy;
> And his dark secret love
> Does thy life destroy.

the two highly conventionalized symbols "rose" and "worm" are capable of being comprehended and responded to separately; indeed, they must be if we are to follow their order in the poem, which is an imaginative order. Now in the device that we have been discussing the effect is obtained by no such temporal ordering of words, each with its independent secretion of associations; it is an effect of simultaneity, the setting side-by-side of words with calculated differences of association. The metaphorical force resides not in order but in collision—a collision that is made to occur on the surface of the poem, and indeed may be, as in Pound's *Mauberly,* the poem itself. Besides the difference in time-order there is a difference in the direction of the poetic impulse: the one is unitive, the other analytical. This is not to say that the analysis implied by the second type of metaphor is never absorbed into the imagination in the better modern poets; but in the wrong hands it is open to the same essential objections that Coleridge raised against the fancy. It can become the work of will and intellect rather than of the imagination. (Parallels in modern painting are to be found in certain of the imitators of Chirico and Picasso.) It can degenerate, in short, into a rather cheap registering of shock for shock's sake.

Both dangers are merely inherent in the technique; not all who have used it have been undone; and every method has its dangers. Returning to the younger poets, we must note first of all significant shifts of emphasis in the particular *choice* of imagery. For one thing, there is more dependence on physical science and the machine than in their immediate predecessors.

> O dancer's realm where the difficult transposition of thought
> Grows the easy act of the oiled, fluid joint,
> The limb obeying even the crook of the dream.

Not always is the identification of human beauty with the beauty of the machine (whatever one may think of such an identification) so fluidly attained. In the following, from a poem about the George Washington Bridge, even the metre is reduced to streamlined mechanics:

> And arc and piers and highway soar from steel
> Into a swinging web of flying sound
> A gull's geometry, a flashing keel,
> A flowering ceremony of the ground.
>
> The men who climbed like birds to trap that wire,
> Like birds were born to know what song and flight meant;
> The temp of an arc, curve of a choir,
> The eye's adagio and the blood's excitement.

More often than not, as in George Barker, scientific imagery is used to provide a contrast between the public disaster and the individual plight:

> Those occasions involving the veering of axles
> When the wheel's bloody spikes like Arabian armaments
> Release Passchendaele on us because it is time, bring
> Also with blood to the breast the boon to the bosom:
> I saw it happen, had near me the gun and the tear.
> Those occasions are all elegiac. The wheel and the wish
> Turn in a turtle the chaos of life. It is death,
> Death like a roulette turning our wish to its will.

But there is nothing in all this that is fresh or perceptibly modified; it is in Rimbaud and Laforgue; and it is everywhere in Hart Crane, who in this, as in other respects, is a favorite influence. Nor altogether novel is that exorcism of the world of commonplace objects which has come to be a contemporary form of the pathetic fallacy. It is a long way back to Mallarmé; but undoubtedly from his fans, handkerchiefs, and hallucinated *meubles* Rilke developed the conceit; and Mr. Auden has acknowledged in verse his debt to Rilke. Stephen Spender states clearly enough what lies behind the current cult of *Dinglichkeit*

> Solid and usual objects are ghosts,
> The furniture carries great cargoes of memory,
> The staircase has corners which remember,
> As fire blows most red in gusty embers,
> And each empty dress cuts out an image
> In fur and evening and summer and gold
> Of her who was different in each.

(Among the ghosts at work here, it may be noted, is the author of *Du Côté de chez Swann.*) Randall Jarrell, more addicted than anyone else to this brand of pathos, analyses the manner in which the actual process of animization takes place:

> The little chairs and tables by a wall
> Bright with the beasts and weapons of a book
> Are properties the bent and varying heads
> Slip past unseeingly: their looks are tricked
> By our fondness and their grace into a world
> Our innocence is accustomed to find fortunate.

Very closely related, if not identical, is the persistent resuscitation of the world of childhood. And here we are led into examining some of the responses to what has been described as the general situation. At least half of this verse must be haunted by recollections of the nursery or the schoolroom. Some of the titles are: *Children Selecting Books in a Library, The Schoolboys, Ode for School Convocation, The Christmas Roses,* and *Boy at a Christmas Tree.* At their simplest the poems in this category

are little more than sentimentally ironic comments, on the part of the "tricked, bitter boys" (to use Mr. Jarrell's phrase), on the disparity between "the rigmarole of private life's belongings" and what is described as a "world without form." Sometimes they rise from irony to a shrilly uncontrolled *saeva indignatio*, which is the note struck by Mr. Barker:

> I know what it was, he said, that you were beginning;
> The rigmarole of private life's belongings.
> Birth, boyhood, and the adolescent baloney. So I say
> Good go ahead, and see what happens then.
> I promise you horror shall stand in your shoes,
> And when your register of youth is through
> What will it be but about the horror of man?
> Try telling about birth and observe the issue.

Actually, Dylan Thomas, the most metaphysical and in all respects the most passionate of these poets, does "talk about birth"; he takes us right back to the embryonic state itself, in which the poet crouches

> "like a tailor
> Sewing a shroud for a journey
> By the light of the meat-eating sun."

But let us not draw too obvious conclusions; these young people are not only acquainted with Freud and Jung but are also aware of the limitations of modern psychoanalysis. Most of them know what they are doing: they are much less the dupe of the unconscious than the Symbolists, for example, or even Rilke himself. What the Freudians call "the traumatic experience" and "the genetic history of the individual" become for them a deliberate metaphysical framework for the emotion provoked by the general catastrophe. And what this amounts to for the poet, of course, is the attempt to construct a myth for himself out of the materials of his own past. As Mr. Jarrell puts it,

> One taste of memory (like Fafnir's blood)
> Makes all their language sensible, one's ears
> Burn with the child's peculiar gift for pain.

As myth it is also the effort to comprehend by analogy with the life of the individual what has been the peculiar destiny of a whole culture. But this is such a powerful direction in other departments of recent literature—in the epic-novels of Joyce and Mann, for example—that no more need be said about it here. How successfully it is being realized in the verse is another matter; the more ambitious and self-conscious exercises in self-mythologizing have been embarassing. Only in a very few lyrics do we detect first signs of that self-knowledge and acceptance which belong to the truly tragic emotion. It is hollow and not quite persuasive in this echo of *Dover Beach*:

> Hide in the heart. There is no help without.
> The strong winds ramp about the world tonight.

It is a little too oratorical in the following:

> Weakness no one honors, historians merely
> Explain it, and it is late for anger, sir.
> There is room for pride and purpose only, spirit
> Freed from the fingering ruin and its wretched last.

Muriel Rukeyser expresses the same Stoicism with a more memorable compactness in the line: "the sure magnificent music of the defeated heart." But Randall Jarrell, at the end of a long and uneven monologue, comes close to the proper note:

> Remember what you learned then: that you are powerless
> Except to know that you are powerless, to learn
> Your use and your rejection, all that is destroying you—
> And to accept it: the difficult resolution.

III

In a letter to his friend Baillie, in early youth, Gerard Manley Hopkins writes, "I think then the language of verse may be divided into three kinds. The first and highest is poetry proper, the language of inspiration. The word inspiration need cause no difficulty. I mean by it a mood of great, abnormal in fact, mental

acuteness, either energetic or receptive, according as the thoughts which arise in it seem generated by a stress and action of the brain, or to strike into it unasked. . . . But I need not go into this; all that is needful to mark is, that the poetry of inspiration can only be written in this mood of mind, even if it only last a minute, by poets themselves. Everybody of course has like moods, but not being poets what they then produce is not poetry. The second kind I call Parnassian. It can only be spoken by poets, but is not in the highest sense poetry. It does not require the mood of mind in which the poetry of inspiration is written. It is spoken *on and from the level* of a poet's mind, not, as in the other case, when the inspiration which is the gift of genius, raises him above himself. . . . Parnassian then is that language which genius speaks as fitted to its exaltation, and place among other geniuses, but does not sing in its flights . . ."

It is unnecessary to mention the third kind of language that Hopkins distinguishes later in this passage; the second kind, or Parnassian, is what interests us. But, before proceeding to examine it, it may be well to point out what Hopkins, although he was undoubtedly aware of the fact, does not mention—namely, that, rather than being the label of a particular movement or school, Parnassianism represents a *phase* or *stage* in the evolution of some important poetic style. (It should not, for example, be confused with the movement of the same name in France toward the middle of the last century.) It can only occur after a period of considerable energy, with its accompanying technical innovations and experiments, has run its course. In the letter quoted, Hopkins uses some lines of Tennyson as an example of the Parnassian; we know that he was reacting also against Morris, Rossetti, and Burne-Jones; and there is little disagreement today that what these mid-Victorian poets actually represent is the liquidation of the great Romantic movement of the beginning of the century. (Hopkins' own verse was an attempt to escape the contagion by a return to an earlier metrical tradition.) One might go on to suggest that much of the poetry produced in England in the sixteenth century is hardly more than a crude Parnassian version of

a style that had already reached its decadence on the continent. Perhaps Spenser is our supreme Parnassian poet. And there is the dreadful probability that the bulk of Roman literature (including even the great Vergil) should really be treated, in relation to its Greek models, as no more than a vast triumph of the Parnassian spirit.

From some of these examples it might seem that what Hopkins has in mind is no different from what we mean by classicism or neo-classicism. But classicism usually includes much more—a specific body of historical reference, and a particular attitude, usually romantic, toward the past, as well as a style possessing certain characteristic features. Parnassianism refers to a particular state or condition of health in *any* language or style. Moreover, it is not to be mistaken for the merely derivative and imitative, which is always with us. Parnassianism has its own degrees of excellence; it has its own "beauties"; Tennyson's *Tithonus* and *Ulysses*, for example, are gems of the species. It is, to quote Hopkins again, "the language and style of poetry mastered and at command but employed without any fresh inspiration." Indeed, it is because the original burden of inspiration has fallen on others that this style can afford to concentrate almost exclusively on surfaces. Deeply involved in our response is the element of recognition: "It is the mark of the Parnassian that one could conceive oneself writing it if one were the poet." But it is a quickly exhausted delight: "I believe that when a poet palls on us," Hopkins observes, "it is because of his Parnassianism. We seem to have found out his secret."

Now it should be no secret that what is here being insinuated is that the work of too many of our "new" poets is subject to the same objections to be raised against the Parnassian. Actually the great movement in Anglo-American verse that stemmed from the French symbolists had lost its greatest energy and was technically rather tired by the time that they arrived on the scene. There had intervened, for example, the tragic and instructive career of Hart Crane, who should have demonstrated the impossibility of making out of verbal shock-tactics, which are at

best a means, a sufficient poetic end. Apparently temptation was too great, however, and with only slight modifications of imagery they have taken over the more important metaphorical devices by means of which their chosen ancestors sought to express the tension that marked their experience. What has been forgotten is just this irrefrangible relationship between language and experience—that Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Eliot and the rest really *earned* their language. Because of our conviction of the incontrovertible reality of their conflict these poets are saved, at their best, from the twin dangers of artifice and insincerity.

From neither of these weaknesses is much of the recent work entirely free. It is spoken for the most part, in Hopkins' phrase, "on and from the level of the mind"—the hard-working, disingenuous mind. This applies equally to the two opposite tendencies represented—the tendency toward a prolix and hysterical rhodomontade, on the one hand, and toward a calculated flatness of prose-statement on the other. In the case of the first, we feel that however desperate the current situation, the poet himself proves nothing by carrying on in such a way; he cannot hope to compete with History. It is "language mastered and at command" only in the sense that it is a deliberate appropriation from known and more convincing sources—the agonized violence of the Rimbaud-Crane strain in modern verse. That such a style should ever have developed into a Parnassian phase may seem anomalous; for the Parnassian is ordinarily characterized by a kind of ironed-out gentility of diction and rhythm. But when the tradition happens to be violence it can be put to Parnassian uses like any other; it can lead to work that "gives away its secret." More easily comparable to the Parnassians of the past are those poets who stuff their verse with the paraphernalia of the familiar, for an effect that is rarely more than that of a sustained facility and cleverness. Here especially do we have the illusion that we are writing the poem—putting it together out of the well-worn spelling-blocks that clutter the nursery floor.

It has not been possible to describe the metrical and rhythmical qualities of this verse; and, without some such description, its

Parnassian character cannot perhaps be appreciated. But from certain quotations it should be clear with what reluctance these poets seem to engage the niceties of the ear in their verse. Too many of them relax into a deliberate sloppiness of melodic line, into what Conrad Aiken has somewhere called an "anti-poetry" —a looseness of syntax, a fondness for the declarative mood, and a frivolous predilection for internal and off-rhymes. Nor has it been possible to enumerate certain other prevailing influences— Hopkins on rhythm, for example, or Yeats on both rhythm and imagery, in neither case altogether fortunate because what is most essential in these two poets is just what is most inimitable— the seriousness of the controlling feeling. But perhaps enough evidence has been offered to suggest that a revival and study of Hopkins' label may not be out of order.

IV

This is a conclusion that will seem too severe; it is an excellent thing that poetry is being written at all, and impressive that it is being written with such abundance. Most of the verse of any period is haunted by the immediate past and is of a fairly monotonous texture. But it is indeed in no carping spirit that the present characterization is made. Rather, it is out of the conviction that poetry has at the moment at least as great a function as at any moment in history. The current interest itself can only correspond to a need for the kind of drastic self-honesty which poetry alone makes possible in a period of historical anguish and confusion. For this reason we have the right more than ever to make the necessary discriminations, to look carefully at the scales. For poetry is the ultimate measure—the ringing-board on which the false or the impure resounds with an unmistakable clarity. It is a measure, first of all, for the poet—of his seriousness and devotion; for the rest of us, of all the values to which we like to pay service.

Interlude With a Pu-Pu Bird

By Nicholas Moore

There are moments when we can truly say
"This is an interlude between dreams."
Then the trees stand elegant in gardens,
And the young girls forget their names

Or the names of their lovers. Then the absurd
Becomes the general. The young men speak
Elegantly and in elegant attitudes
The young women stand and are weak.

What is the truth we seek? Exact
Chronology is the historian's habit.
For us who write in elegant poetry
Such strictness would, I fear, inhibit

That which so clearly we want to say.
Is it a day of emerald skies, of yellow
Asters, geraniums pink in pots, or is it
Merely that our hearts are honest and hollow?

However it is, however it may be, there are times
When the real world indeed seems far away.
The young girls seem to stand like trees in gardens,
And we—the birds in them—what can we say?

The Acrobats

By John Malcolm Brinnin

Not blue, no, on the sea's china edge,
Nor indoors on the noisome breeze
Swung free from ledge to painted ledge
In recreated symmetries,
    But everywhere always falling,
    Rising and slowly failing
From gallows, guillotines, and trees.

Not single, no, on the sovereign bar
Aloft and tenuously kept,
Nor winged on the impulsive air,
But full of wounds, and as inept
    In poise and counterpoise
    As Leonardo's toys
And as, in time, disastrously dropped.

Nor cheerless, ah no, nor spiritless,
As swung on veins and swiftest ropes
They intermediately pass
One face that like a landscape sleeps
    Untethered, far away,
    Tomorrow and yesterday
On the most dangerous ellipse.

Ah, (single, blue, and wingless!) lift
In this aerial enterprise
Heart and its flying bones aloft;
And toward all sleeping landscapes rise
    Nakedly, carelessly,
    Alone and peerlessly;
So quitted of the long trapeze

That outer air by inner stress,
Like an arrow from a tendon sprung,
Is pierced with such decisiveness
That all who ride these tangled swings
    May futures taste and, falling,
    See miracle in failing
Through cross-fire, wire, and the blaze of wings.

Script

By Beverly Baff

"Flora, your mother wants you," and the flowers,
Twisted in glass, split ravelling down their seams,
The gas jets echo your embroidered demur,
And under the chandelier you answer: "Coming."

An era in its ponderable amusement
Finds concentration here; in jars and fringe,
Pastiche of comfort and digestive living,
Conscience affords its lozenge of atonement.

Always the punishment takes place through works,
The penance plied as you apply the thread:
One hundred stitches on the family spread,
And each more circled with ancestral tricks,
Till courage, like a timepiece, ruptures these
Amenities of ritual and disease.

Harbor Impression

By Gray Burr

The gull's wings were white sabres drawn on the blue day
And if the harbor looked like a mouthful of wreck,
Wind-scratched waters were slow tides of gooseflesh on face,
Ships had left heartbreak here, drawn by exotic beck.

But there was dry delicate smell of sun on planks,
Likewise sunsmell on asphalt, exhausts, hoods of cars;
Odor of sun on seawater; shadows broke ranks,
Skittered in swirls, chips, wind was chisel on waters.

Shadow and sun stippled water with dark and wink.
Sun burnished spots of shine but blackchips of shadow
Lurked under lip of each tiny wave, mesh with chink
Glints, the sun sown buttercup thick through the meadow.

But gulls slid down air like rich children laughing swerve
Down marble, though under reckless flesh gaped nothing.
Easy, accustomed, no need of luck nor of nerve,
Though below dusk-fall whipped seas to toxic frothing.

While night's nearness drew drudge from tug, ashore lights
flamed
Fire from wire strung deep in the city's core. And here
An old gull sheathed wings and dozed on a pole, sleep-tamed;
Ballooning from darkness, close now, he dreamed of fear.

Major Catastrophe

By David Newton

EACH AFTERNOON, when the hands of the dollar watch on the wall stood at three-thirty, Sergeant Blunden glanced idly about for a moment as if he had forgotten something. "Hmmm," he said, a slow smile breaking across his homely face, "it must be nearly time for tea." The major shifted in his chair, managed to look startled and annoyed.

"Tea?"

"A spot comes in handy, Sir, about this time of day."

After a thoughtful pause, the major declared, "No harm in it, I suppose."

The sergeant pretended to work a little longer, shuffled the papers on his desk, cast a grateful glance at his superior and sallied forth from their cubbyhole of an office. In the big room outside, he lifted the tired copper kettle from an empty filing cabinet, winking heavily at Corporals Pound and Glassner.

They looked away, suspicious and scornful. Behind his back they always laughed at Blunden and hinted at some perverse relationship between him and the major. A standing joke this, it was little removed from their true belief. They were certain the sergeant was buttering up to the major, angling for a promotion, and they looked upon him as school boys look upon the teacher's favorite. When he carried the kettle to the tap outside, they shook their heads disgustedly.

He returned, unearthed a tiny electric plate and set the water to boil. He asked Corporal Pound to mind it while he took a spin about the warehouse. The major liked a few minutes to himself just before tea was served.

Breaking open the stern leather belt which so cruelly cut the soft flesh of his middle, the major settled back in his chair. He

loosed a great groaning sigh of relief which carried across the painted glass partition. Corporal Pound shrugged his shoulders, grimacing, while Corporal Glassner shook his head slowly.

Through sleepy eyes the major stared at the poster on the wall before him. It was torn and soiled, but its colors were still fresh. Inside a thin red border, the Parliament clock tower stood black beneath a yellow sky. The hands of Big Ben pointed seven o'clock, but the major had never decided whether it was supposed to be morning or evening.

After the usual nostalgic pang shot through his heart, the poster bored him. His eyes rejected it, and his thoughts set out along their worn and familiar path. He thought of the war, the warehouse, the men. He thought of himself. He thought of his wife, of home. He thought of himself, dumbly resenting his lot, aware of his dependence on Blunden and his tenuous connection with the men and their weary civilian helpers.

At one point in this cramped and dismal circuit, however, a mild light seemed to glow across a semblance of order. He thought of the past. While his hand gently stole to the pocket where he kept the medal and the ribbons, he recalled part of the citation. The words were manly and simple, reassuring. Then the other intruded. Twenty-five years came between. His belt was growing tighter every day.

The major glanced down at his legs. There he sat, a man with great past and small future. In the other war he had executed a brilliant river crossing, smashed a revolt and won a medal. His men had lovingly called him Major Catastrophe. Who among them could have predicted he was to round off his career by fattening up in a stuffy little office where afternoon tea loomed as the day's big event?

Twenty-five years. Major Catastrophe, a fire-eater of the first order, sat in a big mahogany chair, growing soft and sleepy over a cushy job two thousand miles or more from the smell of battle.

Could he have done well this time, even without the weight of the twenty-five years? Could he have won the admiration of the men, a thundering nickname and a medal? He wondered. Things

were different. It was all so elaborate and specialized this time. The new warrior had to be a cold, efficient man equipped with precise machines. He had to keep one eye on the clock. He had no time for admiration.

Chances were, the major thought, that he would have failed anyhow this time. After all, he even felt lost in the small role he played. Strange and disturbing, he found, the youth and coolness of the soldiers this time. Those corporals just outside the glass partition, for example.

Whenever he had to face them, he felt their constant appraisal of his actions, his very words. Their eyes seemed to indicate his being weighed and found wanting. Oh, they said nothing, of course, at least not within earshot. But they did seem to drop an occasional hint. At times it almost seemed they might be plotting, biding their time until they could trip him up and whisper him into disgrace with the colonel. Ridiculous! These thoughts he shook off angrily, cursing himself, yet they always returned and returned.

Had not the two of them been clever enough to compel him to sack old Morsley? No question about it, Morsley had been a blundering old donkey, but he deserved something for his good intentions. He had been the only civilian ever to come to the place because he wanted to help win the war.

It was difficult for the major to remember just how or when the corporals had launched their drive to get Morsley out, but he had no trouble recalling their unwavering assault. Every day they had brought him new and undeniable proof of Morsley's "dangerous inefficiency," and his reasoning had seemed no more than a shield of cardboard before that sharp and verified metal.

Unpleasant as they were, his thoughts absorbed him so completely that he usually forgot to buckle his belt before Blunden returned with the tea. The sergeant cleared his throat, remembered leaving the electric plate aglow and backed hurriedly from the cubbyhole. When he heard the major's signal, a low cough, he came in again.

Their talk, once the clatter of the spoons subsided, was of home.

Blunden was from Yorkshire, blessed with a bountiful supply of anecdotes, information and pleasant recollections. He sometimes told of his post in Singapore, then listened attentively while the major enumerated the spots on the globe he had seen.

By the time the cups were stacked for delivery to Corporal Glassner, whose duty it was to wash them, the end of another day was comfortably near at hand. Blunden settled down to finishing off his work. He presented the major with letters to be signed. What a good man he was. The major watched him, watched his big freckled hands sort and staple the papers.

The sergeant was a good man indeed, good enough to handle far more important work. He should have a chance. But. He could go far. There was nothing for him at the depot, nothing for him unless he could be transferred. But.

Blunden went outside the cubbyhole to lock the files for the night. He moved softly, shutting the door behind him without a sound. The major scowled at his green desk blotter, fished a crumpled box of Players from his pocket, selected one of the least damaged and lit it carefully. It was wrong for him to smoke, bad for his digestion and against the doctor's orders, but he felt the need for just a puff or so.

Sergeant Blunden was a fine man, an honest and dependable man, too good to be wasted. Given a push, he would really go somewhere before peace returned. But how would things at the depot move without him? Who else could assume his ticklish priesthood, serve as a bridge between the major and the men?

It was wrong to look at it that way, he reminded himself. Every man should have a fair chance to push ahead. Nobody should be wasted, either, in the wrong spot during a war. It would, he realized, be a simple thing to set the wheels going—a letter to the colonel would do it.

A letter to the colonel. He wrote it one day later in the winter, a day when he was wretched with indigestion. After a morning of unbearable tedium, he felt himself moved by something irresistible. He summoned Corporal Pound to type up the letter while Blunden went for his "spin" before teatime. "The old man fin-

ally got around to knocking off something fat for Blunden," Corporal Glassner was told later.

The major sat looking at, but not seeing, the poster. Should he tell the sergeant? Better clear it up, he concluded. Why not? He selected the words he would use.

Throughout the revelation, Blunden quietly stirred his tea. A smile hovered across his plain face, but he said nothing. The major talked on until his words ran ragged. The smile took hold.

"Likely they'll send you back," the major said.

The sergeant pointed a knobby forefinger at the poster.

"It should be good to hear old Ben once more," he stammered.

The major's teaspoon fell to the floor, clanging loudly. He stooped for it. When he sat up again, he was breathing heavily and his face was dark.

Though Blunden reflected no change through the days of waiting, the major grew steadily more sullen and morose. He had severe attacks of indigestion, not to mention a constant fire in his stomach. He bought soda mint tablets, but felt no better for taking them.

Probing his muddy afternoon thoughts, he colored with rage against himself. It was degrading, no less, that he should quail so at the mere prospect of being left alone to face a handful of his own men. Was he not the man who had gone in single-handed, twenty-five years or so before, to round up the ringleader of a revolutionist gang?

He and Blunden both received letters from the colonel. It was a relief, all in all, when they came. Blunden would return to England, the letters announced, and should be ready to leave at a moment's notice. That was how the colonel ran things. The major tightened his belt a notch and offered congratulations. When a messenger brought the sergeant's sailing order some ten days later, he pretended not to know what it was.

"Well, Sir," the sergeant grinned, "this is it."

"Uh?"

"The order, it came just now." The paper shook in Blunden's hand.

"Um," the major said, looking at the poster.
"It's for today, Sir."
"What time?"
"Six."

The dollar watch indicated three-twenty. The major noticed the poster's frayed edges. Blunden went out to set the water to boil. Just as the stiff belt was released, Corporal Pound burst into the cubbyhole without knocking. Startled, the major bent over his desk.

"Letters for you to sign, Sir." The corporal glanced at his wrist watch, stood waiting. Fumbling for his fountain pen, the major knocked over a box of paper clips. The pen was dry. He looked hopelessly at the young man who snapped open his own pen for his use. When the letters were finished, the corporal blew the last signature dry and marched out. The door banged.

The major stared at the black tower, the yellow sky. After a while he sighed, focussed his eyes on the desk blotter and slowly ran a shaking finger across the countless raised circles on its smudged green surface.

Carpe Diem

In Appreciation of Gertrude Bell (1868-1926)

By Barbara Howes

"Some morning I will be old;
What can I say of myself then?

Mind has mattered so much, and knowledge
Is bottomless as the golden bowl
In the myth, ceaseless as light, grave,
Unemptiable as the sea. One's whole

Being pleads for it, and each
Draught gives ladders to the mind;
One looms and cuts new notches on
The door. And yet what discipline

It takes! The ducks in this shooting-gallery
World roll round too quick again
For more than recognition, never
Grasped whole by the prehensile brain.

For all phenomena we have
So little time, and for perfection
Less. To know, to understand
Has been my passion and addiction.

Some morning I will be old;
What can I say of myself then?

To drink so deeply and to have
So much to give, and at the end
To have nothing. This can happen
Easily; as on a journey, we spend

No thought on where we are; the rumoured
Hills are like gold to pioneers,
Monopolizing sight; we travel
Too far beyond ourselves to seize

Anything from the day. And now
Longing has settled in my lips
And there is no man I can tell
Of it; no knowledge has equipped

Or cautioned me to hold the day
Firmly in mind or hands; each blue
Resinous hour disappears
Like smoke, forgotten and obscure.

Some morning I will be old;
What can I say of myself then?

That having found no substitute
For love, and of its golden bowl
Wrought no replica within, I live
Alone in the gathering darkness of my soul."

The Robbery

By Howard Moss

Partaking jester of my seaboard sense,
Ill winter to his barracks in the snow
Untrains all but the martial filaments,
This fife and drum of vertigo.

In rooms where you have been, I sniff the slow
Aroma rising; the wood's blue smoke
Is nothing but your limbs turned again
On the spit of summer, or the wheel's spoke.

O slouch thief met by dark and moonlight dock,
By shadow street, whose stumble voyage home
Betrays those alcoholic lilac springs
Where sharp suburbia is sea and foam,

Bellow. A thousand windows fall
Through seaweed cover of the waterwall:
Five senses clamor for your tense
Who found me most at my magnificence.

Return of Autumn

By Pablo Neruda

Dropping from bells a day draped in mourning
like the tremulous veil of a vague widow,
a dream, a color
of cherries choked in earth, a wisp
of endlessly rising smoke, changing
the color of kiss and water.

Am I understood: when night
descends from its height, when at a window
the lonely poet listens to hoof-beats of Autumn
trampling leaves of fear and their veins
crackling in the wood,
something spreads against the sky, like a heavy tongue
of some bull, something in the doubt of atmosphere
and sky.

All that exists returns to its place,
the indispensable attorney, hands, oil,
bottles, all signs of life
and journey: beds above all,
full of a bloody liquid,
while in sordid ears the people place their secrets,
and murderers go softly down the stairs,
and only these the galloping hooves
of Autumn's ancient stallion endures
and pounds the grooves.
Autumn's stallion with red hair
with fear-foam flecking jowls
and howls of winds kicked-up with oceanic form
and vaguest scent of underground decay.

Dropping in ash-red color from the sky
all these days that doves must divide
upon this earth: rope woven by forgetfulness
and tears, and long years' sleep of time within
the bells
and all,
old motheaten clothes, women who watch
the snow arrive,
black poppies one cannot observe
and still preserve his life, conserve
all, all ceases at hands that raise
through this wet nothingness of rain.

(*Translated by* Lloyd Mallan)

Watch

By Priscilla Bromley

The grey ship cuts the sea.
The trains run out of town.
Between this city
With its brown night
And all their destinations, round and round,
Black and starred
Is boundless space.
With lights like horns
They ram that distance down.

Face to face,
Here in the silence of the terminals
One can believe the women of this place
Dissolving on a bench like city snow.

One can believe them so,
Benumbed on their luggage, on the edge of fright,
In the hard light.
Here lingers the passive remnant of a crowd
That stares all night
A handsbreath into action.

Stormless time
In this night warmed
As in a fist,
Air as behind the glass of station clocks
And in the watch unwinding on the wrist,
Time below glass and weather below skin
Will keep them fresh among the blistered docks
And the slack lines
Of old platforms
And keep the rigor of their silence

And keep the strictness of their mouths
While night still grips.
It is a word that hardens on the lips
Through which the many voices of this crowd
Come blunt, as if through armor,
Now in the long night of these terminals,
Whatever suns are going up and down
On the large sea,
What trains and ships
Depart this town.

White Lily and Hail

By Richard Eberhart

Tormented by fresh pelting hail
The lily flower complaining saith
Why are not likes alike?
Here all the lowly morning days
My supple body upward bending
Breathe I gleaming intricate
In woven tall tranquillity,

By stones below, their altar cool;
And the rainy sod, sweet soaked
With wholesome mixed liquors,
And roots of trees' fondling arms
Love-webbed in a dense amaze,
And grasses, walking with pale ankles
Around dolmen stones of granite;
Solemn tubers full of sorrow,
Helpless tumescent, urging blessings,
And bold exploring worms small
That cavern slow with choice depend;
And kingly moles with bland eye light,
That hump up and prop the surly roof;
While armies of slight insects, deft,
Suck pleasure in the damp around.

In these my tender summaries,
From out the darker knotted nether
Shunned, I fan my sweet outspread;
Out of the dense, the warmth of ground

Soft and still; moist and noiseless;
But of dirked motion, that I durst
Evade, in my enamelled sky.

Yet here it is to see in the wide sky
White lovely as my naive own.
O I adore. O I am warm.

But look from the polar time and dells
I prickle and crack my crystal sinews
O'er all the land from famous eld,
Fleet-twirler of frosty bedlam,
Bounding to dance maniacal,
Densed in satanical chaos, frigid
In friction's snapping gashes rigid,
Balled all dazzling, lethal, virulent,
Irridescent in my bitten element,
Loath, in electrical laughter shook,
To unlock my flashing nyanzas,
Prance, and hiss, and yell, kissing
I kill, and kiss myself alive
Laughing, singing, and clash, and dance,
Violent-seethed in frozen hurls
Of my pent self ceaselessly breaking,
Creating breathlessly itself in riot
In my giant joyful frenzy,
Majestical, hilarious, triumphing,
Strident and screeching I overwhelm,
Maimer, self-slasher, mutilator,
Whipped, fired, iced, destroying,
Lordly and masterful in panic
Lordly I command in master panic
And run and laugh giant zest
Appalling the dun air of heaven.

On Poetry

By Jean Wahl

I

An image traverses the mind, leaves a brilliant trace, and a sigh. On this trail, words move forward, and move forward rhythmically. Sometimes, even, there is no image, but only this sigh of joy or of pain, of hope or of despair, and the beginnings of words and rhythm. Poetry arises from this appeal which a higher sense, an uncommon sense makes to a higher speech, breaking the ordinary rhythm, substituting for it an extraordinary rhythm; or sometimes it is a reciprocal appeal of the one to the other.

To be a poet is to have the consciousness of one's unconsciousness. It is the accomplishing of a movement from unconsciousness to consciousness. We see this movement as well in Valéry and T. S. Eliot as in the Surrealists. The Surrealists are more conscious than they think, and Valéry less than he thinks. The emphasis on consciousness in Valéry and the emphasis on unconsciousness in the Surrealists will finally coincide perhaps. For poetry is a *coincidentia oppositorum,* as it is a *docta ignorantia.*

Etymologically, the poet is the one who makes. But I think he is also the one who is in process of being made. *Poietes pepoiemenon ti.* There is something to be said in favor of passivity, wrote Novalis. Wordsworth spoke of wise passivity.

Perhaps it is time to free ourselves from a certain diffidence towards inspiration shown in Valéry, in Eliot, who are more inspired than they care to say.

The poet is created and nevertheless he creates himself, he frees himself.

II

For whom does the poet write? He tells secrets; he tells things he ought not to tell. He tells them to an imaginary being who is himself and not himself. He tells secrets to himself, that is, he has secrets in himself, for himself; that is to say that he has the consciousness of his unconsciousness. And that, we have said already.

But not every kind of secret. Poetry is the journal of the highest moments of the poet, of his heightened consciousness. It is poetry of circumstance, as Goethe says, but of circumstance rendered uncircumscribed, of general, universal circumstance.

These higher individual moments are at the same time universal moments, *loci communes*, common places. They are *loci communes* about pleasure, about life and pain and love. But life, pleasure, pain, love, are *loci communes* themselves, notwithstanding their utmost particularity in each individual. We find here again a *coincidentia oppositorum*.

The intensity of these moments is such that the individual is carried outside himself, and he is carried outside himself because he is inside himself, and thus he is depersonalized, because, thanks to the object of his feeling or to the feeling itself, he is at the utmost point of personality.

The French Review *Fontaine* of Algiers devoted one issue in 1942 to poetry as spiritual exercise. And I would like to take this first as signifying that poetry is an exercise of breathing, of inner breathing (the first meaning of spirit). And it is also the exercise of thinking and feeling. And it is at the same time experience. Exercise emphasizes the active aspect; experience, in the sense in which we take it here, rather the passive one. It is also adventure, this whirling mixture of activity and passivity. It is also operation, working, that is, exercise and adventure, inasmuch as they have an effect on space, time, words. It gives a purer meaning to the words, as Mallarmé said; and it gives words to unknown meanings; and it works in a certain manner on time and space. But all these expressions and even the word "prayer" (used

by Henri Brémond to give us a certain idea of *poésie pure*) are more or less inadequate.

So we have found the antitheses: consciousness and unconsciousness, passivity and activity, generality and particularity, united in the essence of poetry. We could say the same thing about the other arts. They are heightened consciousness because they are tense, implying duality and contrasts. What distinguishes poetry from the other arts is that it achieves this union by words, by a certain order of words. The words, ordinarily the vehicle of consciousness, made to express generality and which are the most skilful instruments of our will, now are steeped in unconsciousness, keep the magic of particularity and arise from a kind of passivity.

The poet gives a name to his state of consciousness; this name is none other than the whole poem. The poem constitutes one great word. And each line constitutes one word. And the poem comes to the consciousness of the poet as a whole, an entirety without past and future. Just as the Word becomes world for God, so, in another way, for the poet, words are worlds.

Naming this state of consciousness, formulating his poem, he names himself; but he feels at the same time that he names more than himself, that he has passed beyond. He names something that no longer admits naming.

But let us remember that the poet, inasmuch as he is a poet, must not know what we have said—or, if he does, then he must forget it.

III

A poem, says A. C. Bradley, is a totality, a resonant meaning, or a meaning resonance. It is constituted by an interaction of words, evoking an interaction of images and tendencies.

Let us note that the sound of words and their meanings can not be separated. As a critic says: If we hear: "the coracles are numb," it is not at all like: "the oracles are dumb." Neverthe-

less, the sounds are very much alike in appearance. But they are not at all alike in reality.

On the other hand, it is very often not the meaning of a line or even of a poem that takes possession of us, but an inner accompaniment, some private poem, as I. A. Richards says. We may say that the interaction of words and the flow of images are more important than the meaning, although the meaning can not be separated from them. Coleridge wrote: "Poetry gives more pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood." And we find similar observations in Eliot, and in Hopkins: "Poetry is speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest of meaning. Some matter of meaning is essential to it but only as an element necessary to support and employ the shape which is contemplated for its own sake." Such teachings are not without importance in this age of over-intellectual criticism.

Poetry strives towards the immediate through varying nuances of light and color. The seven types of ambiguity of Empson, allusion and indirect meaning, metaphor, antithesis, on which Hopkins insisted, paradox, of which Cleanth Brooks speaks, are indications of the striving towards the ineffable, towards the effability of the ineffable.

Poetry has more and more taken consciousness of itself, of its essence. We might say that the romantic movement marks the moment where poetry developed this consciousness of itself for the first time. Classicism was poetry unconscious of itself. Romantic poetry knows itself as poetry.

Herbert Read has said in a very interesting manner of English poetry, that it was poetry of man in the time of the Renaissance, poetry of religion with Milton, and poetry of nature with Romanticism. And then there was but one thing left for it: to be poetry of poetry.

So poetry has taken consciousness of itself in Romanticism, at the same time that it was a poetry of nature, and now it is in a certain manner the study of its own essence. Being poetry of poetry it becomes, in a purer form than before, knowledge of itself.

IV

In general, poetry is knowledge and sees at the same time the cloud of unknowing and the radiance of knowledge.

This knowledge is a kind of transforming knowledge. We have said that poetry is a kind of operation, immediately on time, mediately on space; we might say a manipulation of time and space. It is a condensation and lengthening of time, the fabrication of a time which is time no longer. The poet isolates the moment, to which he gives a duration not commensurable with the time of every day, since it is, paradoxically, at the same time swifter and slower, like the duration of a dream, of a trance, where an infinity of resonances are united in one moment of rapture and ecstasy. Occasionally the poet creates this new time by a fusion of many epochs and images. So in French poetry, Gérard de Nerval and Apollinaire; in English and American poetry, T. S. Eliot.

Although poetry is not an art of space, we come, thanks to it, into a space; but into a space which is space no more. We have at the same time a feeling of nearness and distance; most of all we have a feeling of a living space, the space of the flames and the clouds and the streams of Shelley, the space of the mountains and the stones and the grass of Wordsworth, the space of things and angels of Rilke.

Far and near spatially, ancient and new temporally, foreign and familiar spiritually, such are these poetic moments. Coleridge makes from the strange something familiar; Wordsworth from the familiar something that is strange; and Novalis by a still stranger magic accomplishes both at the same time. Thus, poetry is a direct knowledge and a transforming knowledge.

Here we might reflect on the possible union of poetry and philosophy. For it is, perhaps, or so we hope, not completely true to oppose poetry as unofficial view of being, to philosophy as official view of being. Philosophers have very often emphasized the importance of immediate and poetic knowledge. So Herakleitos: "And the Sibyl, with raving lips, uttering things solemn, unadorned and unembellished, reaches over a thousand years with

her voice because of the God in her." And Descartes wrote when he was young that there is more philosophy in the madness of the poets than in the reasoning of the philosophers. So we see that true philosophers acknowledge the value of the poetic approach to reality. In fact Hamlet was more of a philosopher than Horatio.

Let us remember that two of the most important of contemporary philosophers, Whitehead and Heidegger, make appeal to and require the help of the poets. Whitehead invokes Shelley and Wordsworth; Wordsworth makes us feel the immutability of certain aspects of nature; Shelley, the universal flux, or rather the melodious strains running through the whole. And Heidegger, when he wishes to make us realize our kinship with the world, the Being in the World (prior according to him to the Cartesian Being thinking) quotes Hoelderlin and Rilke. The kinship of poetry and philosophy reveals itself when both reveal our kinship with the world.

It remains true that, up to the present moment, poetry, more than philosophy, has made us realize the first philosophical utterance, that of Thales: "All things are full of Gods."

By a curious phenomenon, while conscious of himself as knowing, the poet is conscious of himself as existing. Not so curious; for knowledge is existence, in man, and existence knowledge. Man is a knowing existent.

And existence implies transcendence; man exists only because he feels things and beings outside himself. In the same way, knowledge implies transcendence.

A. C. Bradley has said that the poet points beyond. It is the same thing that we have said when we were speaking of this movement of transcendence. And poetry accomplishes it the more easily by virtue of the fact that "it comes we know not whence." That is, it has transcended from the unknown to us, as it transcends from us to the unknown. No wonder that this heightened existence and this acute knowledge, which is poetry, implies the feeling of the beyond; poetry comes from the beyond and goes toward the beyond.

Let us add that the beyond must not necessarily be conceived

as outside our universe or our soul, for we do not know the limits of the universe or of the soul.

Let us add also that the existence of the poet is not divorced from action. Is it not significant that in the occupied countries today poetry is the voice of existence, that is, of resistance to the debasement of human nature?

On the other hand, the poet is not to be opposed to the mystic. It has been said that the poet speaks and the mystic prefers the silence. But leaving aside the fact that many mystics have spoken, and spoken much and beautifully, let us say that poetry ends in silence. Perhaps we could say that poetry is only our manner of giving hues and vibrations to the silence by which the poem is followed and enveloped.

Annunciation

By Harvey Buchanan

We think about these things when they are done
Never at noon with the sun on the wall
Making clear patterns, with noises from small
Things in the garden: never with the sun.

Purity greeting purity, and I
Outside, looking at an angel, your hand,
And a room full of light; waiting for sand
To pass through glass, to flow so I may die.

We cannot think of angels or a lover
With light pouring down and blinding the eye:
We live in silent ways, in rooms, in hope;
And great announcements help us to discover
Why prophets speak and other women tie
Their heavy garments with a softer rope.

Girl At Midnight

By Weldon Kees

Then walk the floor, or twist upon your bed
While bullets, cold and blind, rush backward from the
target's eye,
And say, "I will not dream that dream again. I will
not dream
Of long-spent whispers vanishing down corridors
That turn through buildings I have never known;
The snap of rubber gloves; the tall child, blind,
Who calls my name; the stained sheets
Of another girl. And then a low bell,
Sounding through shadows in the cold
Disturbs the screen that is my mind in sleep.

"—Your face is never clear. You always stand
In charcoal doorways in the dark. Part of your face
Is gone. You say, 'Just to be through with this damned
world.
Contagious fogs blow in. Christ, we could die
The way deer sometimes do, their antlers locked,
Rotting in snow.'

"And I can never speak.
But have I ever told the truth to you?
I did not ask for this; a new disease threads in.
I want white curtains blowing in the night;
I want your lips upon my lips, your mouth
Upon my breasts, again, again, again, again;
I want the morning filled with sun.

"But I must dream once more of cities burned away,
Corrupted wood, and silence on the piers.
Love is a sickroom with the roof half-gone
Where nights go down in a continual rain.
Heart, heart. I do not live. The lie of peace
Echoes to no end; the clocks are dead.
What we have had we will not have again."

Ballads for Janus

By Edwin Honig

I

Two men were sitting in a dark quiet room
figuring out their lives,
coming to no conclusion.
One said, I want to rule the earth.
Other said, I want to limit birth.
One said, I need a thousand wives.
Other, turning on the lights,
said, Brother, you're my enemy.
One took out a gun,
aimed at the other's head.
Other moved faster, shot him dead;
standing in the room, tired,
said, Now I'm done,
shot himself like he shot the other one.

Guess it was too light.
Guess the men were old.
Guess they were tired of living in
this dark tired old world.

II

Two men were walking in the middle of the night.
One turned left, the other turned right.
One went through hell, sweating like a fool.
The other smelled lilies, sitting in a pool.
One lost his arms trying to hold shadows.
The other kissed girls standing on their toes.
One lost his face, walking through a wall.
The other lay with ladies both great and small.
One met the other waiting at the end.
What did you find, my lucky friend?
Lillies, pools, and a thousand wives.
Hell, walls, and a thousand knives.
With a smile, they broke each other's head.
One still lived, the other was long dead.

III

In the golden old days the twins sat down
to play on lutes while all danced around.
A little later when the earth was proud
they sang to kings while others bowed.
Then came days when the whole world groaned;
they tinkled like beggars and were stoned.
Came an age of wolves and fools;
one walked hungry, the other in jewels.
Now camps are set for the mad and the sane.
The twins face each other and are one again.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE GROWTH OF AMERICAN THOUGHT: *Merle Curti.* Harpers.

In the beginning it must be understood that Professor Curti has not written a book to comprehend and elucidate the growth of American thought. In his introduction he writes that this is, "not a history of American thought, but a social history of American thought, and to some extent a socio-economic history of American thought." He thus makes an effort to avoid the unhappy experience Parrington had with his title, *Main Currents of American Thought.* Also, with this distinction he has destroyed the validity of many criticisms that could be made of a book whose title suggests such a broad frame of reference and whose content is so comparatively limited. This is not to say that Professor Curti has treated his material superficially or neglected to support his arguments with massive detail. But the book which he has written is not exactly the book which the publishers are selling.

The justification for limiting a subject certainly rests to a large degree on the inclination of the historian and the scope of the materials he has at hand. Nevertheless, the character of that limitation reflects a concept of history, and any consideration of such a work is apt to be conceived as a criticism of that concept. On the one hand, the historian may regard his work as a technique and a science; a careful collection of evidence to be followed by the measurement and organization of that evidence as a thesis. But written history that has become an organic part of human experience contains an element that breaks down the rigid boundaries of technique and science. That added factor is insight and feeling that comprehends the human drives behind the event.

Professor Curti is a professional historian with the professional's mastery of technique and scientific method. However, since he writes for an audience whose requirements of historical writing are broader and more general than those of the expert, it is pertinent to inquire how much this book contributes to the synthesis of past human experience.

To attempt to answer that question implies that an historical work can be evaluated on the basis of its artistic validity. Germane to this general idea is the assumption that history has a function beyond that of accumulating and preserving information. The qualifying term "socio-economic," in spite of its connotation of academic asepsis, is meaningless if defined as designating forces outside the lives of men and women.

The measure of the success of this book as a part of organic history is indicated in the material selected, the organization, and the threads of intellectual development chosen to bind the whole together. Professor Curti's material is limited to the academic, theological, scientific, political, economic, and to a lesser extent, philosophical aspects of American thought. The arts and the less formal manifestations of the intellectual life of the people, when considered at

all, are used as supporting material rather than as vital and motivating forces. Intellectual as a critical term is here limited to its more formal implications.

Into this framework a great mass of material has been patiently and industriously fitted. Much of it is unfamiliar and derived from sources that have long been neglected. To support his thesis, Professor Curti occasionally accumulates so much evidence that the thesis is lost like a Christmas tree under a mass of ornaments. Furthermore, having used a quantitative rather than a qualitative criterion for this evidence, Professor Curti has insufficient space to modify and evaluate his facts. Presumably to compress the material further, individuals are given identification tags which with frequent repetition grow tiresome. An example of this is the tag for Elihu Burritt who in four out of five references is called "the learned blacksmith" with and without quotation marks. These are faults that less hurried editing could repair. More serious is the tendency to fit complicated men into complicated ideas with such single adjectives as "primitivist" for Thoreau and "escapist" for Henry James. This is a fault of the method.

In a broad sense, the body of fact is centered around the idea of a developing American democracy. Using the Hegelian technique of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, Professor Curti presents first the pro-democratic ideas, then the opposition they evoke, and finally the synthesis which is the foundation of the following epoch. The framework is chronological with a repeating pattern.

The intellectual basis for democracy as manifest in the aspects of American life Professor Curti has elected to study is the matrix in which the whole is set. Given the limitations he has chosen, he succeeds in making a valid point amply supported by an elaborate collection of detail.

Up to this point Professor Curti's book is a valuable piece of historical research and organization. He has collected the material and arranged it according to an organic pattern. But beyond this he does not go. From the point of view of idea he has gone over essentially the same ground that Parrington covered in his *Main Currents of American Thought*. Where they differ is the means employed. This is much more than a difference of technique.

Parrington, for all of his many faults, illuminated the American mind. He wrote in terms of human experience, the gestation of the ideas which direct the course of American life. He did not cut his material by any such artificial pattern as "socio-economic" thought. He conceived of thought as something more than cerebration; his criteria were rather mental vitality, sensitivity, and vision. The essential pattern was the clarification and synthesis of thought through the minds of men of letters.

There is no point in comparing *The Growth of American Thought* with Parrington's work for the purpose of evaluating either as a contribution to American history. The justification for such a juxtaposition is rather to contrast the method and to determine which best fulfills the function of organic history. Reduced to its simplest terms, such a comparison must show whether it is possible to explain the processes of democratic thought in its application to the American people without full consideration of the minds, and processes of the minds which to a large extent created that thought and translated it into effective words. Inarticulate thought is self-contradictory.

Professor Curti created a framework of ideas. He limited himself to the outline rather than the body. The result remains an elaborate skeleton which is

a valuable source book for those who wish to study a specialized part of the anatomy of American thought. It is a point of departure. The task of creating the whole body begun by Parrington remains to be carried to completion. In this critical period in our history with our rapidly changing values, we urgently need a living frame of reference to supply the essential continuities of free living.

H. A. Brinser

POEMS: *Dunstan Thompson.* Simon & Schuster.

If the last two decades of contemporary poetry were characterized by magnificent failure, the poetry of the 40's is well on its way to becoming a poetry of magnificent imitation. Dunstan Thompson's poems suffer greatly from a rhetoric gone sleight-of-hand, a rhetoric drowned in Hopkins and resuscitated in George Barker.

In the kind of rhetoric which Mr. Barker and Mr. Thompson exploit, there is a fear of statement. Rococo embellishment supersedes the subject matter. In Mr. Thompson's case, the subject matter deserves better treatment. For he is one of the few young poets (or old ones, as a matter of fact) able to write of the war with any degree of honesty. It is a personal war for him, and that is perhaps why it comes through very often as real, poignant and moving. Generally his poems are concerned with the terrifying moment in human experience, the moment in which nostalgia is transformed by horror. When he is able to write of this experience directly, even simply, he often achieves poems of great strength, such as *This loneliness for you is like a wound.* Most often, the meeting of the sensitive ego and the actual terror of the war produces only a series of beautiful, unnecessary verbal splashes. The sailors, sea Narcissi, planes and war symbols are effectively drowned in a sea of mirrors, alliteration, internal rhyme, proper names, and an obsessive use of the word O.

Although Mr. Thompson's verbal dexterity is disarming, his main preoccupation is decoration. He is also capable of writing extremely fine lines. But for every magnificent statement he can make, such as "When now that death is not a metaphor, / Who dares to say that love is like the war?" we have a hundred examples of merely fluent word manipulation. For a superb line like, "Our bayonets blood time," we have too many stanzas reminiscent of

> Took up the chase with grace, looked out to earn
> The tapestry of scene, where queens lie long
> In dalliance for a day:
> You held him happy, heard halloo of hunting horn.

The poems are moving, then, when they are most simple. I mean simple in the sense of not being overloaded with a vast display of frosting, gingerbread, and superfluous gilt. In a poem like *Largo,* which seems to me one of the best poems yet written concerning the war, the stanza structure is infinitely complex; yet, the poet achieves a clarity of diction and utterance which completely eludes his grasp in something like the last stanza of *Prince Atlantis,* a stanza made almost ludicrous by the surplus of its effects.

Mr. Thompson is gifted, honest, and has something to say. He has to fight against the baroque dishonesty which by now has become a kind of chi-chi game of interior decoration poetry. He is as technically competent as anyone writing today. His mastery of the stanza form and the caesura, in particular, is something many devotees of the iambic pentameter line might well look to for guidance. What he has to get over is a distressing adherence to alliteration as the deus ex machina of variation in poetry. Mr. Thompson is much too gifted to become a ranking member of the "welter of wound" school of verse.

HOWARD MOSS

About The Contributors

BEVERLY BAFF lives in New York City. This is her first appearance in *The Chimera*. ☆ JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN has just completed a new book of poems. He teaches at Vassar College. ☆ H. A. BRINSER, formerly with Harpers, now runs a farm in Massachusetts. ☆ PRISCILLA BROMLEY is presently living in Philadelphia. Her work has appeared in *Poetry* and *Furioso*. ☆ HARVEY BUCHANAN, now attending Yale University, has had work published in *Accent*. ☆ An Ensign in the United States Navy, GRAY BURR has published poetry in *Accent*. ☆ RICHARD EBERHART, a lieutenant in the United States Navy, is presently stationed at Virginia Beach, Virginia. ☆ EDWIN HONIG is author of a new book on Lorca for the New Directions *Makers of Modern Literature Series*. ☆ Poetry by BARBARA HOWES has been printed in a number of magazines. ☆ Colt Press has just brought out the first book of poems by WELDON KEES. ☆ LLOYD MALLAN is now at Claremont, California. ☆ NICHOLAS MOORE is one of the most active of Britain's young poets. ☆ A third volume of the poems of PABLO NERUDA, eminent Chilean writer, is scheduled for publication in the near future. ☆ EMMA SWAN has had a number of her poems published. ☆ Formerly a teacher at Bennington College, WILLIAM TROY has for many years contributed to the liberal weeklies and quarterly reviews. ☆ JEAN WAHL, a professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne until imprisoned by the Germans, is presently teaching at Mount Holyoke College. He has published one book of poetry.